

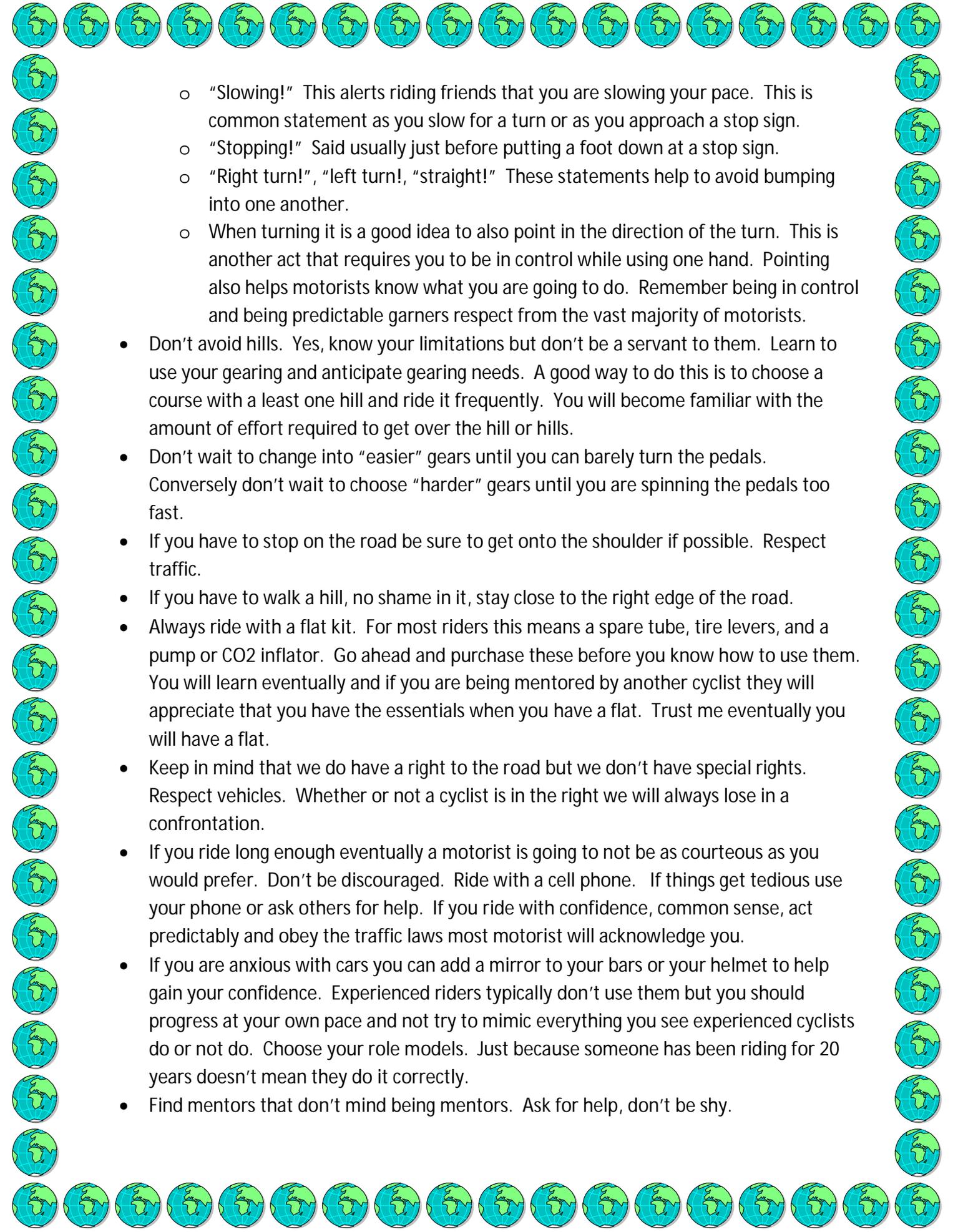
DAC Tips for New Cyclists

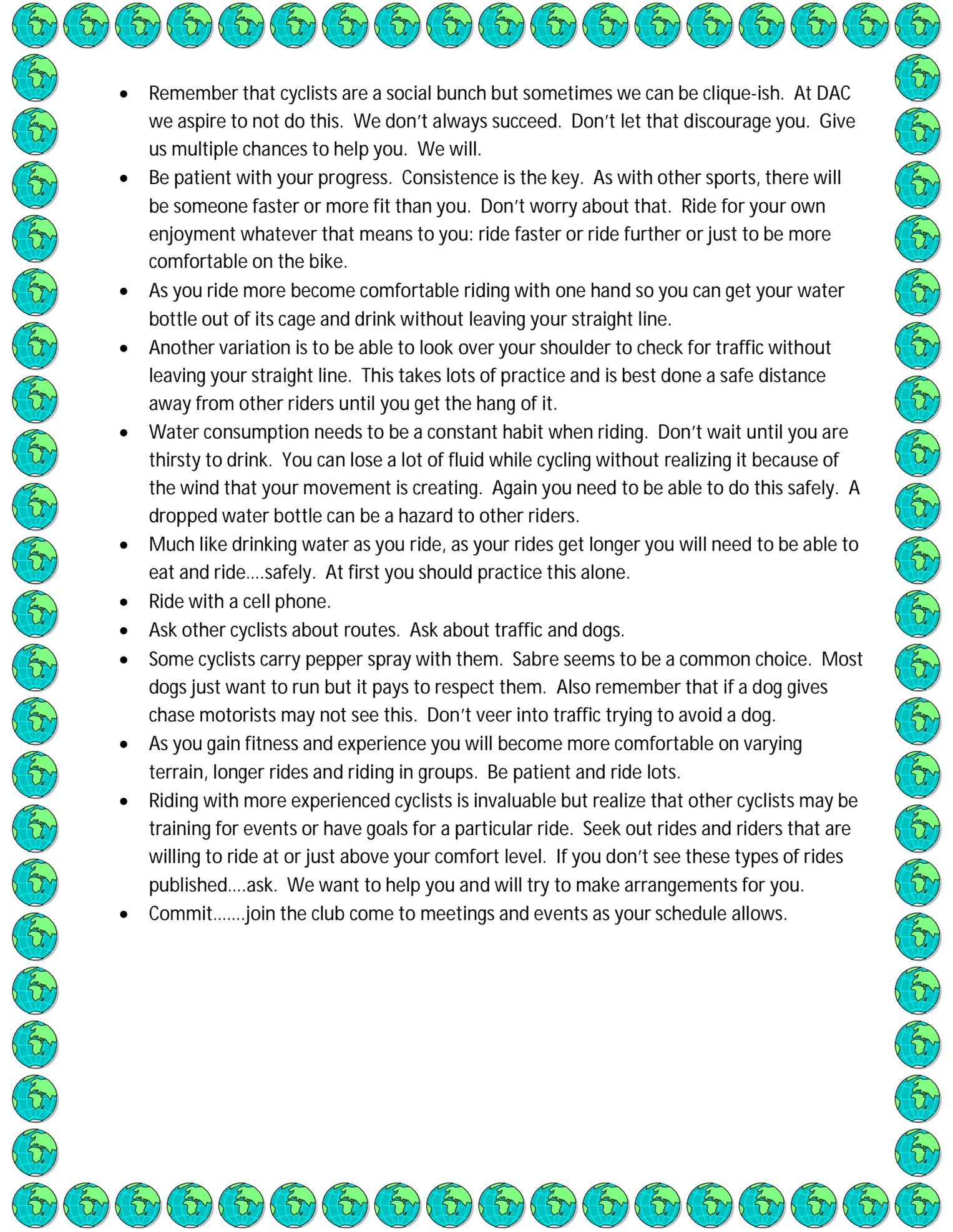
You learned to ride a bike as a child so you got this, right?

Well.....

Experience is the best teacher but here are a few tips to get you going:

- ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET. Alabama law only requires children under 16 to wear a helmet. DAC and good smarts dictate that everyone wears a helmet.
- DO NOT USE EARPIECES WHILE CYCLING. You need to hear what's going on around you. Traffic, dogs and other cyclists need to be heard.
- Comfort dictates you should invest in some good cycling shorts. Good shorts AND time in the saddle will find you more comfortable. Don't give up and buy a humongous padded saddle. Ask for advice on short selection.
- Most experienced cyclists are going to have good shorts, cycling gloves, sunglasses, a jersey and at least one water bottle depending on the length of the ride and weather conditions.
- Be seen. Bright colored jerseys or "blinky" lights are a good idea especially on early morning or evening rides.
- Maintain a straight line as you ride. Riding predictably and straight makes you safer to other cyclists and particularly motorists. Looking and behaving proficiently gains respect from all. This is a skill so give it some time.
- Actually looking ahead helps you to ride straight. Learning to operate your gearing is important but don't spend a lot of time looking down at your gears. You will drift left or right and this can cause safety issues.
- It is best to ride single file with ample room for slowing without compromising safety. Alabama allows us to ride two abreast but this should only be done when there is NO TRAFFIC.
- Get into the habit of calling out traffic conditions:
 - "Car back!" There is a vehicle coming from behind us. It doesn't matter if it's a truck or golf cart. It's enough to say "car back".
 - "Car up!" There is a vehicle coming in front of us.
 - "Car left!" There is a vehicle approaching us from a side road on the left.
 - "Car right!" There is a car approaching us from a side road on the right.
 - "Dog left!" You get the idea.

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- “Slowing!” This alerts riding friends that you are slowing your pace. This is common statement as you slow for a turn or as you approach a stop sign.
 - “Stopping!” Said usually just before putting a foot down at a stop sign.
 - “Right turn!”, “left turn!”, “straight!” These statements help to avoid bumping into one another.
 - When turning it is a good idea to also point in the direction of the turn. This is another act that requires you to be in control while using one hand. Pointing also helps motorists know what you are going to do. Remember being in control and being predictable garners respect from the vast majority of motorists.
 - Don’t avoid hills. Yes, know your limitations but don’t be a servant to them. Learn to use your gearing and anticipate gearing needs. A good way to do this is to choose a course with a least one hill and ride it frequently. You will become familiar with the amount of effort required to get over the hill or hills.
 - Don’t wait to change into “easier” gears until you can barely turn the pedals. Conversely don’t wait to choose “harder” gears until you are spinning the pedals too fast.
 - If you have to stop on the road be sure to get onto the shoulder if possible. Respect traffic.
 - If you have to walk a hill, no shame in it, stay close to the right edge of the road.
 - Always ride with a flat kit. For most riders this means a spare tube, tire levers, and a pump or CO2 inflator. Go ahead and purchase these before you know how to use them. You will learn eventually and if you are being mentored by another cyclist they will appreciate that you have the essentials when you have a flat. Trust me eventually you will have a flat.
 - Keep in mind that we do have a right to the road but we don’t have special rights. Respect vehicles. Whether or not a cyclist is in the right we will always lose in a confrontation.
 - If you ride long enough eventually a motorist is going to not be as courteous as you would prefer. Don’t be discouraged. Ride with a cell phone. If things get tedious use your phone or ask others for help. If you ride with confidence, common sense, act predictably and obey the traffic laws most motorist will acknowledge you.
 - If you are anxious with cars you can add a mirror to your bars or your helmet to help gain your confidence. Experienced riders typically don’t use them but you should progress at your own pace and not try to mimic everything you see experienced cyclists do or not do. Choose your role models. Just because someone has been riding for 20 years doesn’t mean they do it correctly.
 - Find mentors that don’t mind being mentors. Ask for help, don’t be shy.

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- Remember that cyclists are a social bunch but sometimes we can be clique-ish. At DAC we aspire to not do this. We don't always succeed. Don't let that discourage you. Give us multiple chances to help you. We will.
 - Be patient with your progress. Consistence is the key. As with other sports, there will be someone faster or more fit than you. Don't worry about that. Ride for your own enjoyment whatever that means to you: ride faster or ride further or just to be more comfortable on the bike.
 - As you ride more become comfortable riding with one hand so you can get your water bottle out of its cage and drink without leaving your straight line.
 - Another variation is to be able to look over your shoulder to check for traffic without leaving your straight line. This takes lots of practice and is best done a safe distance away from other riders until you get the hang of it.
 - Water consumption needs to be a constant habit when riding. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. You can lose a lot of fluid while cycling without realizing it because of the wind that your movement is creating. Again you need to be able to do this safely. A dropped water bottle can be a hazard to other riders.
 - Much like drinking water as you ride, as your rides get longer you will need to be able to eat and ride....safely. At first you should practice this alone.
 - Ride with a cell phone.
 - Ask other cyclists about routes. Ask about traffic and dogs.
 - Some cyclists carry pepper spray with them. Sabre seems to be a common choice. Most dogs just want to run but it pays to respect them. Also remember that if a dog gives chase motorists may not see this. Don't veer into traffic trying to avoid a dog.
 - As you gain fitness and experience you will become more comfortable on varying terrain, longer rides and riding in groups. Be patient and ride lots.
 - Riding with more experienced cyclists is invaluable but realize that other cyclists may be training for events or have goals for a particular ride. Seek out rides and riders that are willing to ride at or just above your comfort level. If you don't see these types of rides published....ask. We want to help you and will try to make arrangements for you.
 - Commit.....join the club come to meetings and events as your schedule allows.